<u>Claims</u>

1. A process for the isolation of triterpene saponins from plants belonging to the family *Myrsinaceae*, <u>characterized in that</u> said process comprises the steps of
   (a) exracting the dried plant parts with an alcohol and concentrating the extract,
   (b) removing the apolar fraction from the extract by liquid-liquid extraction with an apolar solvent, and
   (c) further purifying the saponins in the alcohol extract by liquid -liquid extraction, filtration and chromatography.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the alcohol is methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, butanol, each optionally admixed with water.

3. A process according to claim 1 wherein the saponins of the alcohol extract are further purified by
   (c6) extracting the aqueous fraction with butanol satured with water,
   (c7) evaporating the organic layer to dryness,
   (c8) washing the residue in a ketone, and
   (c9) filtering off the crude saponin mixture.

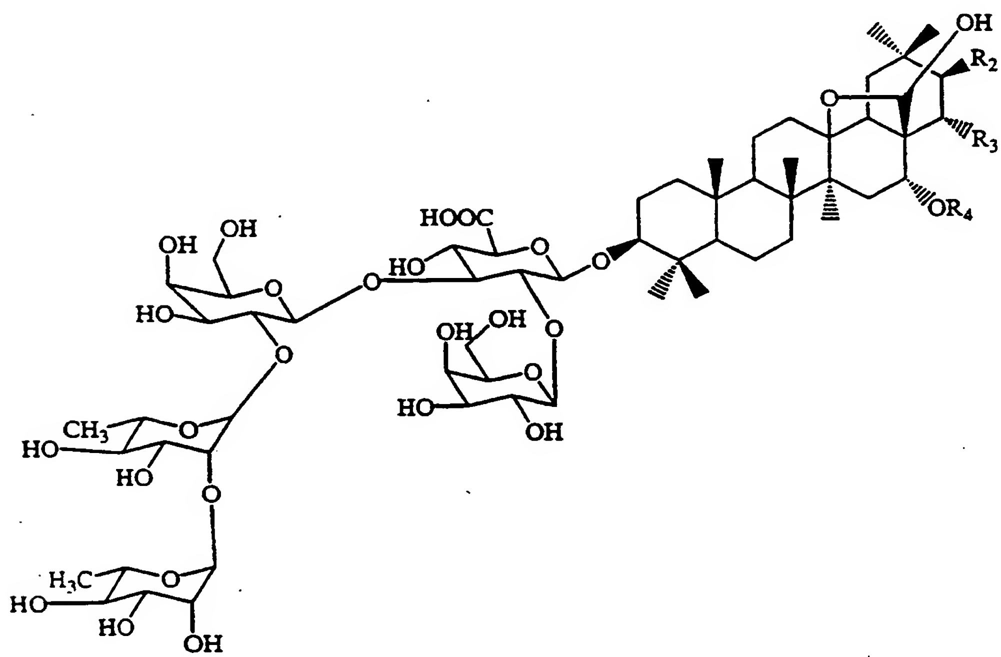
4. A process according to claim 1 wherein the saponins are isolated from the plant species *Maesa balansae*, and the chromatography comprises straight phase chromatographyliquid chromatography on silicagel or reversed-phase liquid chromatography with gradient eluent system using
   A : 0.5 % ammonium acetate in water
   B : methanol
   C : acetonitrile
   wherein at t = 0, (A:B:C) = (60:20:20) and t = end, (A:B:C) = (0:50:50).

5. A triterpene saponin obtainable by a process according to anyone of claims 1 to 4.

6. A triterpene saponin according to claim 5 wherein said saponin is isolated from the plant species *Maesa* balansae, and the chromatography comprises reversed-phase liquid chromatography with gradient eluent system using
   A : 0.5 % ammonium acetate in water
   B : methanol
   C : acetonitrile
   wherein at t = 0, (A:B:C) = (60:20:20) and t = end, (A:B:C) = (0:50:50), and wherein said saponin has the following characteristics :

Compound 1 : MW = 1532, λ_{max} = 228.6 nm, λ_{max2} = 273.3 nm ;
Compound 2 : MW = 1510, λ_{max} = 223.9 nm, λ_{max2} = 274.5 nm ;
Compound 3 : MW = 1532, λ_{max} = 279.2 nm, λ_{max2} = 223.9 nm ;
Compound 4 : MW = 1510, λ_{max} = 280.4 nm, λ_{max2} = 222.7 nm ;
Compound 5 : MW = 1574, λ_{max} = 276.8 nm, λ_{max2} = 225.0 nm ; or
Compound 6 : MW = 1552, λ_{max} = 279.2 nm, λ_{max2} = 223.9 nm.

7. A triterpene saponin having the formula



wherein R_2 is $-O(C{=}O)C_6H_5$ or $-O(C{=}O)C(CH_3){=}CHCH_3$, R_3 is (E) or (Z) $-O(C{=}O)CH{=}CH\text{-}C_6H_5$, and R_4 is hydrogen or $-(C{=}O)CH_3$.

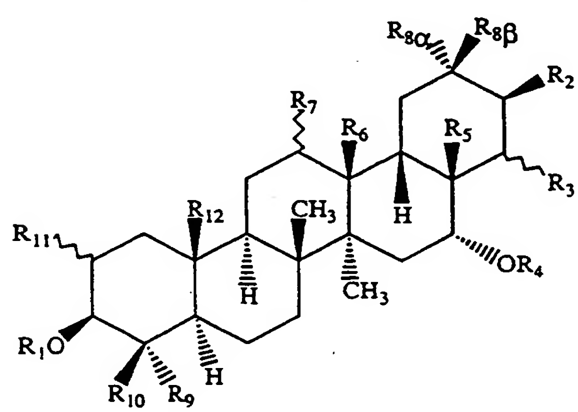
8. A compound according to claim 7 wherein
in compound 1, R_2 is $-O(C{=}O)C_6H_5$,
R_3 is (Z) $-O(C{=}O)CH{=}CH\text{-}C_6H_5$,
R_4 is hydrogen;
in compound 2, R_2 is $-O(C{=}O)C(CH_3){=}CHCH_3$,
R_3 is (Z) $-O(C{=}O)CH{=}CH\text{-}C_6H_5$,
R_4 is hydrogen;
in compound 3, R_2 is $-O(C{=}O)C_6H_5$,
R_3 is (E) $-O(C{=}O)CH{=}CH\text{-}C_6H_5$,
R_4 is hydrogen;

in compound 4, R_2 is $-O(C=O)C(CH_3)=CHCH_3$,
R_3 is (E) $-O(C=O)CH=CH-C_6H_5$,
R_4 is hydrogen;
in compound 5, R_2 is $-O(C=O)C_6H_5$,
R_3 is (E) $-O(C=O)CH=CH-C_6H_5$,
R_4 is $-(C=O)CH_3$;
in compound 6, R_2 is $-O(C=O)C(CH_3)=CHCH_3$,
R_3 is (E) $-O(C=O)CH=CH-C_6H_5$,
R_4 is $-(C=O)CH_3$.

9. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient and as an active ingredient a triterpene saponin as defined in claim 5, 6, 7 or 8.

10. A composition according to claim 7 adapted for parenteral administration.

11. Use of one or more triterpene saponins for the preparation of a pharmaceutical composition for treating leishmaniases in hosts infected by *Leishmania* species, characterized in that the saponin has the formula



a stereoisomeric form thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable addition salt thereof, wherein

R_1 is hydrogen, $-(C=O)C_{1-5}$alkyl, $-(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl, $-(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl, a monosaccharide group or an oligosaccharide group ;

R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, $-O(C=O)C_{1-5}$alkyl, $-O(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl, $-O(C=O)C_6H_5$, or $-O(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_3 is hydrogen, hydroxy, $-O(C=O)C_{1-5}$alkyl, $-O(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl, $-O(C=O)C_6H_5$, or $-O(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_4 is hydrogen, C_{1-6}alkyl, $-(C=O)C_{1-5}$alkyl, $-(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl, $-(C=O)C_6H_5$, or $-(C=O)C_{2-5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_5 is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)CH_3$, CHO, COOH ; or
R_5 and R_2 form a divalent radical of formula -C(=O)-O- ;
R_6 and R_7 are hydrogen; or taken together they form a bond; or
R_5 and R_6 form a divalent radical of formula

-CH_2-O- (a),
-CH(OR_{13})-O- (b),
-C(=O)-O- (c),

wherein R_{13} is hydrogen, $C_{1\text{-}6}$alkyl or -(C=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl ;
$R_{8\alpha}$ and $R_{8\beta}$ each independently represent CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)$ $C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, $CH(OCH_3)_2$, CH=NOH, COOH ;
$R_{8\beta}$ and R_3 form a divalent radical of formula -C(=O)-O- ;
$R_{8\beta}$ and R_5 form a divalent radical of formula -CH_2O-CHOH- ;
R_9 is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, COOH ;
R_{10} is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, COOH ;
R_{11} is hydrogen, hydroxy or O-C(=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl ; or R_{10} and R_{11} form a divalent radical of formula -CH_2O- ; and
R_{12} is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)CH_3$, CHO, CH=NOH, or COOH.

12. Use according to claim 11 wherein
R_1 is hydrogen, -(C=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, or an oligosaccharide group ;
R_3 is hydrogen, hydroxy, -O(C=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, -O(C=O)$C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl, -O(C=O)$C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;
R_4 is hydrogen, $C_{1\text{-}6}$alkyl, -(C=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, -(C=O)$C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl ;
R_5 is CH_2OH, $CH_2O\text{-}C(=O)CH_3$, CHO ; and
R_6 and R_7 taken together form a bond; or
R_5 and R_6 form a divalent radical of formula

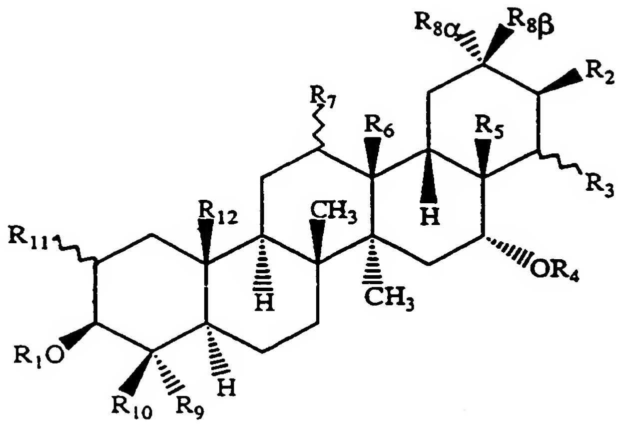
-CH_2-O- (a),
-CH(OR_{13})-O- (b),
-C(=O)-O- (c),

wherein R_{13} is hydrogen, $C_{1\text{-}6}$alkyl or -(C=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, ; and
R_7 is hydrogen ;
$R_{8\beta}$ represents CH_3, CH_2OH, CHO, $CH(OCH_3)_2$, CH=NOH, COOH ;
$R_{8\alpha}$ represents CH_3 ;
$R_{8\beta}$ and R_3 form a divalent radical of formula -C(=O)-O- ; or
$R_{8\beta}$ and R_5 form a divalent radical of formula -CH_2O-CHOH- ;
R_{10} is CH_3, CH_2OH ;
R_{11} is hydrogen, hydroxy or O-C(=O)$C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl ; or

R_{10} and R_{11} form a divalent radical of formula -CH_2O- ; and
R_{12} is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2O-C(=O)CH_3, CHO, or CH=NOH.

13. Use according to claim 12 wherein
R_1 is hydrogen or an oligosaccharide group ;
R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, -O(C=O)C_{1-5}alkyl, -O(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl, -O(C=O)C_6H_5, or -O(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;
R_3 is hydrogen, hydroxy, -O(C=O)C_{1-5}alkyl, -O(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl, -O(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;
R_4 is hydrogen, C_{1-6}alkyl, -(C=O)C_{1-5}alkyl, -(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl, -(C=O)C_{2-5}alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;
R_5 is CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, CH_2O-C(=O)CH_3, CHO, COOH ; and
R_6 and R_7 taken together form a bond; or
R_5 and R_6 form a divalent radical of formula
-CH_2-O- (a),
-CH(OR_{13})-O- (b),
-C(=O)-O- (c),
wherein R_{13} is hydrogen ; and
R_7 is hydrogen ;
$R_{8\alpha}$ and $R_{8\beta}$ both represent CH_3 ;
R_9 is CH_3 ;
R_{10} is CH_3 ;
R_{11} is hydrogen ; and
R_{12} is CH_3.

14. A method of alleviating clinical manifestations of, and curing disorders known as leishmaniases attributable to infection by protozoan parasites of the genus *Leishmania* in both men and animals, comprising administering to an infected host a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of formula:



a stereoisomeric form thereof or a pharmaceutically acceptable addition salt thereof, wherein

R_1 is hydrogen, $-(C{=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, $-(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl, $-(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl, a monosaccharide group or an oligosaccharide group ;

R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, $-O(C{=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, $-O(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl, $-O(C{=}O)C_6H_5$, or $-O(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_3 is hydrogen, hydroxy, $-O(C{=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, $-O(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl, $-O(C{=}O)C_6H_5$, or $-O(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_4 is hydrogen, $C_{1\text{-}6}$alkyl, $-(C{=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, $-(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl, $-(C{=}O)C_6H_5$, or $-(C{=}O)C_{2\text{-}5}$alkenyl substituted with phenyl ;

R_5 is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C({=}O)CH_3$, CHO, COOH ; or

R_5 and R_2 form a divalent radical of formula $-C({=}O)\text{-}O-$;

R_6 and R_7 are hydrogen; or taken together they form a bond; or

R_5 and R_6 form a divalent radical of formula

$-CH_2\text{-}O-$ (a),

$-CH(OR_{13})\text{-}O-$ (b),

$-C({=}O)\text{-}O-$ (c),

wherein R_{13} is hydrogen, $C_{1\text{-}6}$alkyl or $-(C{=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl ;

$R_{8\alpha}$ and $R_{8\beta}$ each independently represent CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C({=}O)\ C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, $CH(OCH_3)_2$, CH=NOH, COOH ;

$R_{8\beta}$ and R_3 form a divalent radical of formula $-C({=}O)\text{-}O-$;

$R_{8\beta}$ and R_5 form a divalent radical of formula $-CH_2O\text{-}CHOH-$;

R_9 is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C({=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, COOH ;

R_{10} is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C({=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl, CHO, COOH ;

R_{11} is hydrogen, hydroxy or $O\text{-}C({=}O)C_{1\text{-}5}$alkyl ; or R_{10} and R_{11} form a divalent radical of formula $-CH_2O-$; and

R_{12} is CH_3, CH_2OH, CH_2OCH_3, $CH_2O\text{-}C({=}O)CH_3$, CHO, CH=NOH, or COOH.